FWIS 155: Growing Pains
Spring 2021
MWF 2:45-3:40pm
Fully online
Instructor: Burke Nixon

Welcome to FWIS 155! This syllabus will introduce you to the course (and to me, your instructor) and outline what you can expect and what's expected of you throughout the semester. Always refer to the syllabus first whenever you have a question about course policies or due dates or anything else related to our class. If you can't find the answer in the syllabus, you can always ask me in person or by email. (Don't ask me *before* checking the syllabus, though!)

What's the point of this course?

This course, like all FWIS courses, is designed to help you build your academic writing and communication skills. If you don't think of yourself as a particularly good writer, don't worry. This class will give you plenty of strategies and ideas for how to strengthen your writing, and--I hope--how to find meaning and enjoyment in the writing process along the way. On the other hand, if you already *do* think of yourself as a particularly good writer, then I hope this course will show you that even the best writers are always learning and adding to their toolbox, and that even the most successful writers struggle sometimes[1].

This particular FWIS focuses on stories about the difficulties of adolescence and early adulthood, stories that look at the process of growing up and the obstacles we encounter along the way. We'll examine literature (and film) from a variety of voices, time periods, and places, and we'll also reflect on our own growing pains and coming-of-age stories. Along the way, we'll explore how family, relationships, social class, gender, race, sexuality, place, and identity all intersect with and shape the experience of adolescence and young adulthood. We'll also look at how the literary genre of coming-of-age stories—also known as the *bildungsroman*—has experienced its own growing pains over the centuries.

[1] I *love* writing and struggle with it almost daily. Even writing this syllabus, I've struggled to figure out what I want to say next or how exactly to say it. *Nobody* writes perfect first drafts, not even the great writers we'll read this semester (including Jamaica Kincaid, Yu Hua, Jane Austen, and James Joyce, all pictured above).

Exploring these questions will be more than an academic exercise: it will be a way to learn more about ourselves, our relationships, and the world around us. We might even grow a bit in the process. At the same time, our course topic will be a vehicle for achieving the specific learning goals of this class…

What should we be able to do by the end of the semester? How will grades be determined?

Our course objectives are based on the FWIS program's official learning goals[2] along with some elaboration specific to this particular FWIS. Pay attention to these objectives, because your final grade will be based on the extent to which you achieve them. By the semester's end, you should be able to…

- **Objective #1:** Use reading and writing as a tool for learning, discovery, and self-understanding.
- **Objective #2:** Read literary and academic texts in an accurate and nuanced way.
- **Objective #3:** Tailor your writing in style, substance, and structure to meet the needs of a specific audience, genre, and purpose.
- **Objective #4:** Write clear, concise, compelling, conscientious sentences.
- **Objective #5:** Make clear, meaningful arguments supported by well-chosen evidence and effective analysis of that evidence.
- **Objective #6:** Structure your writing coherently and cohesively.
- **Objective #7:** Effectively incorporate, attribute, cite, and respond to the work of others in your own writing.
- **Objective #8:** Demonstrate critical thinking about other people's arguments and supporting evidence, as well as your own arguments and supporting evidence.
- **Objective #9:** Pose interesting questions and explore significant problems, debates, or assumptions through writing.
- **Objective #10:** Pay attention to the views of others, fully and fairly portray those views, and demonstrate humility and civility in expressing your own views.

These objectives essentially describe what effective writers and scholars do. Each graded assignment in this course will allow you to demonstrate your mastery of one or more of these objectives. When I evaluate your work, I'll place it in one of the following categories for each objective on each assignment: fully mastered (FM), mostly mastered (MM), not yet mastered (NYM). For each assignment, I'll give you a rubric that details the expectations for each category, and whenever I evaluate your graded work, I'll

[2] https://pwc.rice.edu/our-programs/first-year-writing-intensive-seminars/fwis-learning-goals

explain which aspects of the category that, in my assessment, you haven't yet mastered. Here's how I'll determine your overall grade:

- By the end of the semester, if you've demonstrated that you've fully mastered *every* objective on *every* assignment, you'll receive an A in the course.
- Any category that you *mostly* mastered on a graded assignment will lower your overall grade in the course by one partial letter grade, from an A to an A-, an A- to a B+, a B+ to a B, a B to a B-, a B- to a C+, a C+ to a C, and so on. Thus, if you fully mastered all the objectives on every assignment by the end of the semester except for one, which you mostly mastered, you would receive an A- in the course.
- Any category that you've *not yet mastered* by the end of the semester will lower your overall grade by one whole letter grade. If, by the end of the semester, you've fully mastered six of the ten learning objectives and not yet mastered the other four, you would receive a F in the course.
- One more example, combining all three grading categories: if you've fully mastered eight of the objectives, mostly mastered one objective, while having not yet mastered one objective by the end of the semester, you would receive a B- in the course.

As you can see, receiving a "mostly mastered" or "not yet mastered" on even just *one* graded assignment in the course lowers your overall grade. This might seem scary. But here's some good news: This course, like all FWIS courses, emphasizes writing as a *process*. You will have opportunities to write and revise multiple drafts. You'll also have a chance to receive feedback from me (and your peers) before you submit the final draft of each assignment. And even *after* you submit a final draft and receive my feedback, you still have a chance to revise and improve each assignment one last time at the end of the semester to demonstrate your mastery of the objectives. In other words, your final grade is only determined by how many objectives you've mastered by the *end* of the semester, after you've revised any work that needs revising. I'll explain more about the end-of-the-semester revision process when we get closer to the end of the semester.

You won't receive any number grades. With the exception of the mid-semester progress report, you won't even receive any letter grades until your final overall grade. I'm doing this for several reasons, but the main one is this: I want your grade in this course to reflect how well you've mastered our goals. Focusing on your mastery of these goals will help you and I both get a clearer sense of what you're doing well on and what you still need to work on. Knowing which goals you've fully mastered so far, which ones you've mostly mastered, and which you've not yet mastered should give us a clearer sign of your progress than receiving a "91" on one graded assignment and an "87" on the next[3].

How many graded assignments are there? What are they?

Each unit of the course will culminate in a graded writing assignment (although my grading method won't be a typical number or letter). Here's a brief description of each one:

[3] It's always important to give credit when you're building on other people's ideas. My ideas about evaluating your work this semester--and, in some cases, for this syllabus in general--are built on ideas I've encountered from other educators at Rice and beyond, including Caleb McDaniel, Betsy Barre, Linda B. Nilson, and L. Dee Fink.

- **First graded assignment**: For this assignment, you'll write a short creative piece inspired by the first two stories we'll be reading in class (by James Joyce and Jamaica Kincaid). You'll write a personal essay or short story about a "growing pains" moment from your youth, and we'll use this piece to introduce ourselves to each other and to introduce two of our objectives: using writing as a vehicle for self-knowledge and writing clear, concise, compelling sentences.

- **Second graded assignment**: For this assignment, you'll choose one of the short stories we've read and discussed for class, and write a 4-5 page thesis-driven literary analysis essay, developing an argument about an insight this story offers about the difficulties of growing up. On this assignment, you'll demonstrate your ability to make a convincing argument with supporting evidence from the text and a "close reading" of that textual evidence.

- **Third graded assignment**: For this assignment, you'll write a 6-8 page paper about Jane Austen's *Emma*, developing an argument that builds on the work of other scholars. This paper can be focused on the debate over whether the novel is a *bildungsroman* or it can join another scholarly conversation related to the novel. This assignment will allow you a chance to demonstrate your mastery of all ten objectives.

- **Final ungraded assignment**: For this assignment, you'll write a 3+ page personal essay or scene analysis about one of your favorite coming-of-age films. This assignment will not be graded, but it's required if you want to turn in end-of-semester revisions of the graded assignments.

In addition to these major assignments, you'll have required daily assignments that will be evaluated for completion. Let me explain what's expected of you for each type of assignment and how they'll factor into your final grade in the course:

- **Reading responses** - For each required reading assignment, you'll post a reading response in the Discussions section of Canvas. These responses are *conversational* (i.e. informal); you'll have a chance to think through the readings by writing about them and responding to some of your classmates' ideas. Although these responses will help you develop your mastery of all ten objectives, these responses will only affect your final grade in one category: objective #1. I allow each student to skip one reading response or submit two responses late. If you do all the other reading responses, you'll receive *a fully mastered* for your overall reading response grade. If you do most of the other reading responses but skip more than one or submit more than two late, you'll receive a *mostly mastered*, which will lower your final grade in the course by a partial letter grade. If you don't submit a majority of the reading responses on time (or at all), you'll receive a *not yet mastered*, which would lower your overall grade in the course by a full letter grade.

- **Process Work** - This course will require you to write rough drafts in advance for each major assignment. It will also require you to submit pre-writing before the rough draft, or even a second draft before the final. All of this is process work. Remember that FWIS courses want to help you think of writing as a process (rather than something you do once, in a hurry, the night

before the paper is due). Students who fail to submit the process work for an assignment will not be allowed to revise that assignment at the end of the semester (which would likely have a significant effect on your final grade). Unlike reading responses, I don't allow you to skip any process work without penalty. But I will give you extensions on the process work if you ask in advance. Which leads me to the next question…

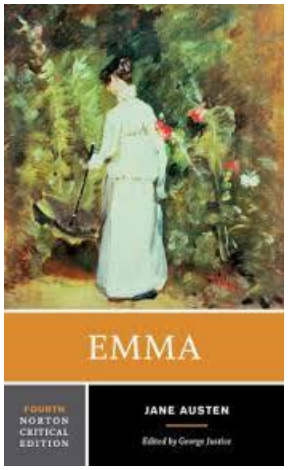
What's our course policy on late or missing work?

For your major writing assignments, I'm flexible about late work *as long as you ask me in advance.* I understand that sometimes you might be overwhelmed by other classes or by life in general when a paper is due. I want you to turn in your best work, even if it means asking me for an extension. If you email me any time *before* the assignment is due, I'll give you an extension of *up to one week*. (Note: I won't respond to emails asking for an extension; if you ask me, consider the extension granted…unless you're emailing after the deadline.) On the other hand, reading responses don't really work if you submit them late. The point of the reading response is to get you to read and share your thoughts *before* class, so that we can discuss the readings in class. They'll always be due at noon, so that I have time to read them, but I recommend you submit them the night before. But I know that school and life can be hectic sometimes, so remember that I allow you to skip up a reading response or submit two late responses penalty. (These late responses must be submitted before the due date of the major graded assignment for that unit or they won't count at all.) Likewise, the point of process work is to get you working ahead of time on your essay. I'll give you a 48 hour extension if you ask, but if you fail to submit it after 48 hours, you won't be able to revise that assignment at the end of the semester. (Remember, though, that process work assignments are graded for completion; they can be messy!)

A big caveat: We all have to be extra flexible during these uncertain times. I'll try to hold you to a high standard while also being understanding about your personal situation, and you should do the same with me. In both cases, the key is going to be for us to continue to communicate with each other. If you have to miss several classes or assignments, be sure to reach out to me when and if you can.

Note that participation in this class *won't* be evaluated as part of your overall grade. But participation *will* help you and your classmates maximize your learning and ultimately master the objectives. Class is also more meaningful and enjoyable when you participate. So: participate! Use the unmute button and share your thoughts. Respond to someone on the Zoom chat. Listen actively and show us that you're listening. Get to know your classmates in the breakout rooms. Send me your reflection emails whenever I ask for them at the end of class. Read your classmates' reading responses. Your efforts will always be worth it.

Finally, I want us to emphasize six values as a group this semester: *Empathy. Curiosity. Community. Honesty. Reflection. Growth*. Try to let these values guide both your work and your participation in this class.



What will we be reading in this class?

We'll begin by reading some classic coming-of-age short stories, and then we'll spend several weeks reading *Emma*, the last novel Jane Austen published in her lifetime, before reading some academic articles about *Emma* and the *bildungsroman*. Normally, I provide a physical course packet for my students, so you can have a physical copy of all the shorter course readings, but that won't work this semester, so I'm going to provide you with PDFs on Canvas. If you have access to a printer, I strongly encourage you to print out the course readings and take notes on them[4]. It could help you more effectively accomplish the course objectives--and thus help your overall grade.

You have to buy one book: *Emma*. And I don't want you to buy just any version; you need the 4th Norton Critical edition (pictured above): https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393927641

I recommend you buy the book directly from them--and order it very soon, so you aren't caught without a copy when we begin reading it later this semester. If you buy it from Amazon or elsewhere, make sure it's the edition pictured above. The version from Norton is $18.75 (plus shipping). There are free online versions of the book that can be useful for searching certain terms, but I want you to buy--don't rent!--this particular print version. Making marginal notes and underlining will make it easier for you to find evidence when you write your big *Emma* paper. If you really prefer the e-version, I won't force you to buy the book, but you'll have to figure out the pages on your own, since you won't have our page numbers.

Finally, at the end of the semester, you'll be watching some coming-of-age movies (outside of class). All movies will be available to stream through Kanopy, a movie streaming service Rice provides to all faculty and students. If you haven't signed up for Kanopy, it's easy to do so through the Rice Fondren library website. Just Google it.

[4] Research suggests that we comprehend a text better when we read the words on paper rather than on a screen. Plus, you're going to be looking at screens A LOT this semester. Why not take a break--and avoid distractions--by reading on paper? If you want to do this but don't have access to a printer, let me know and I'll see what I can do.

How do we get feedback on our drafts? Do you have office hours?

Normally, I meet with students in Brochstein Hall, the beautiful glass coffee shop on campus. This semester, I'll be having office hours on Zoom. Not as cool. But I'll still be able to give you one-on-one feedback. (And maybe I'll be able to do outdoor office hours for anyone on campus as the semester progresses.) Here's how these one-on-one meetings will work: Before each final draft is due, I'll post a sign-up for individual meetings. These are optional, but they tend to be very helpful, since I get to focus exclusively on your work. The meetings will usually last 20 or 30 minutes, and I'll spend the first 5-10 minutes reading your latest draft. I won't always be able to read your whole draft, and I almost certainly won't be able to talk to you about everything I notice. We'll have to focus only on the most important things. Still, this feedback should give you direction as you work on your graded draft.

Can we also get feedback via email? How else can we get feedback on our work?

I don't usually give feedback by email. If you send me your paper and ask me to give you feedback, that requires me to do all the work while you're off somewhere else, doing other things. Don't send me your work and ask me to look it over, unless I explicitly tell the class that you can email me a new draft and get feedback.

We'll be doing peer review (outside of class, usually) for most of the major assignments. You'll be looking at two of your classmates' work and they'll be looking at yours. This will be part of your process work. You don't *have* to take your classmates' advice--in fact, you shouldn't blindly accept their suggestions--but you do have to consider it and incorporate their suggestions when you think it will improve the work.

You can also get feedback from someone *outside* of our class by visiting the CAPC, Rice's Center for Academic and Professional Communication. The CAPC will be offering online appointments this semester[5], and I encourage you to make an appointment whenever you want help or an outside opinion on your work in this course. CAPC consultants *do not proofread or edit* your work, but they will provide feedback on topics such as the organization of your paper or presentation, the coherence of your argument, appropriate sentence structure and grammatical errors. They can even help you brainstorm or help you practice an oral presentation.

Wait. Couldn't it be an Honor Code violation to get help from someone on a paper?

Getting feedback on your work from anyone--me, a peer, a CAPC consultant, a parent or a sibling--wouldn't be an Honor Code violation. Receiving feedback is a crucial part of writing. Feedback is when someone offers *suggestions* about your writing; feedback is *not* when someone actually writes or dictates something--even one single passage--for you. When someone writes or dictates even a small part of your work for you, that would be a potential violation of the Honor Code.

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[5] You can make an appointment here: https://pwc.rice.edu/center-academic-and-professional-communication

One of my jobs as your FWIS instructor is to help you learn the proper use and citation of other people's words and ideas[6]. In every discipline and subject area, from STEM to the humanities, scholars build on and critique each other's work. Thus, academic writing requires writers to quote, cite, paraphrase, and summarize each other a *lot*. I'll help you learn how to do this appropriately; that's part of objective #7.

But you should know right away that using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism. To put it another way, presenting someone else's work as if it's your own is cheating, and a potential violation of the Honor Code. (It would also go against the values of our course.) For example, you would be plagiarizing if you used an online summary--SparkNotes, for instance--to help you write a reading response for a story you haven't read, or if you quoted a passage from that online summary in your own paper without attribution. Either way, you're presenting someone else's work as your own and thus violating the Honor Code. I will help you better understand academic citation this semester, but even minor plagiarism could still cause you to receive a "not yet mastered" for objective #7, or even for multiple categories if you plagiarize large portions of an assignment. Plagiarism hasn't ever been an issue for the vast majority of my students, but let me tell you this: If you're ever feeling desperate about an unfinished assignment and the thought crosses your mind to use someone else's work, you would be *much* better off not completing the work and talking to me about it. I'll be understanding in that case, but I probably won't be very understanding at all if you demonstrate academic dishonesty.

What are the class expectations for participation online?

I've already touched on this, but I want to say a bit more: You're expected to attend our Zoom meetings every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You should arrive on time, you should participate, you should be demonstrating active listening skills, and you should share your opinions and ideas during each class. I prefer for you to have your video on; I want to be able to fully engage with you. If, however, you have a personal or technological reason for keeping your video off, I simply ask you to email me before class to let me know. *You don't need to tell me why your video is off, just let me know that it will be off.* (But if you ever need to mute your video and briefly step away, that's fine, of course.) My goal for this class is to create a true community; we can only do that if you and I both commit to being fully present (and fully human) online.

[6] Here's Rice's official statement on FWIS courses and Honor Code violations, which informs my policies about plagiarism: "One of the purposes of FWIS is to help new students understand the Rice Honor Code and, more explicitly, to teach students the rules of paraphrasing and scholarly attribution, and the appropriate uses of different types of evidence. Accordingly, FWIS instructors will take an educational approach to transgressions of these rules and respond to errors in these areas foremost as issues for grading and opportunities to correct errors, rather than as instances of academic dishonesty. At the same time, all FWIS instructors retain the authority to treat instances of repeat or egregious violations as matters for the attention of the Rice Honor Council.In this course, students are expected to do the actual writing of their assignments on their own, with no outside help from anyone else. However, students are strongly encouraged (and will sometimes be required) to collaborate on all other aspects of their coursework; including discussing assignments, reading each other's work, and making suggestions for editing and revision." I thought about using this statement verbatim in my syllabus, but I didn't want the section on plagiarism to give the appearance of plagiarism.

Who can I talk to if I'm feeling really stressed or anxious at any point during the semester?

College can be stressful, especially in 2020/2021. If, for any reason at any point, you begin to feel that your stress level is affecting your personal well-being or mental health, and you'd like to talk to a professional counselor, let me know and I'd be happy to help you get in touch with someone from Rice's Wellbeing or Counseling Center. You can also contact them directly through their websites. Appointments this semester are virtual. Here's a link to their 24/7 phone number if you want to reach out to them: https://wellbeing.rice.edu/talk-someone

What do I need to do if I have a documented disability?

If you are seeking adjustments or accomodations for a disability, *please email me during the first two weeks of class.* All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Additionally, students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services if they haven't already done so. And more generally, if there's anything I can do to help the online learning experience for anyone in the class, at any point in the semester, please let me know. (Even if it's a criticism of some aspect of my teaching, still let me know.)

Okay, what are we doing each day? What are the due dates for all of our assignments?

Here's our course calendar. You're expected to keep up with all of these due dates even if I don't mention them during class. At the same time, some of these dates and assignments might change. It happens every semester, and the possibility may be even more likely this semester. But here's the tentative plan:

Mon. 1/25: Introduction to the course
Wed. 1/27: Read Joyce's "Araby" and submit Reading Response by noon
Fri. 1/29: Read Kincaid's "Girl" and submit RR by noon

Mon. 2/1: Make Perusall comments for Saunders's "Thank You, Esther Forbes" and submit prewriting for GA#1
Wed. 2/3: No homework (submit Rough draft #1 early if you want)
Fri. 2/5: Submit rough draft #1; no class; optional meetings

Mon. 2/8: Submit peer review comments
Wed. 2/10: Submit final draft of GA#1 before class
Fri. 2/12: Read Hua's "On the Road at Eighteen" and submit RR

Mon. 2/15: Read Salinger's "Franny" and submit RR by noon
Wed. 2/17: No class; "sprinkle" day
Fri. 2/19: Read Packer's "Brownies" and/or Bass's "Juggernaut" and submit RR (with prewriting)

Mon. 2/22: Submit GA#2 rough draft
Wed. 2/24: No homework; work on revising GA#2

Fri. 2/26: Submit peer review draft

Mon. 3/1: No class; "sprinkle" day
Wed. 3/3: No homework; continue to edit and revise GA#2
Fri. 3/5: Submit final draft of GA#2

Mon. 3/8: Read *Emma* volume 1, chapters 1-6 (p. 5-36) and submit RR by noon
Wed. 3/10: Read *Emma* volume 1, chapters 7-12 (p. 36-77) and submit RR by noon
Fri. 3/12: Finish volume 1 (p. 77-106) and submit RR by noon

Mon. 3/15: Read *Emma* volume 2, chapters 1-6 (p. 107-142) and submit RR by noon
Wed. 3/17: Read *Emma* volume 2, chapters 7-12 (142-181) and submit RR by noon
Fri. 3/19: Finish volume 2 (p. 181-216) and submit RR

Mon. 3/22: Read *Emma* volume 3, chapters 1-7 (p. 216-260) and submit RR by noon
Wed. 3/24: Read *Emma* volume 3, chapters 8-13 (p. 260-298) and submit RR by noon
Fri. 3/26: Finish *Emma*! (p. 298-333) and submit RR by noon

Mon. 3/29: Submit pre-writing for *Emma* essay
Wed. 3/31: Read Kohn's "Reading *Emma* as a Lesson on 'Ladyhood': A Study in the Domestic Bildungsroman" and submit RR by noon
Fri. 4/1: Submit summary process work assignment

Mon. 4/5: Submit research and quotes for Emma essay
Wed. 4/7: Submit intro for *Emma* essay
Fri. 4/9: Submit intro and first two body paragraphs for *Emma* essay

Mon. 4/12: Submit complete rough draft of GA#3
Wed. 4/14: No homework; work on revising GA#3
Fri. 4/16: No homework; work on editing GA#3

Mon. 4/19: Submit final draft of GA#3
Wed. 4/21: Watch Burnham's *8th Grade*
Fri. 4/23: Watch Gerwig's *Lady Bird*

Mon. 4/26: Watch Jenkins's *Moonlight*
Wed. 4/28: Watch the coming-of-age movie of your choice and submit final RR; reflection day
Fri. 4/30: No homework; reflection day

Wed. 5/12 (last day of finals): Submit ungraded personal essay/narrative reflection and optional revisions by **NOON (central standard time)**